

is the public funds for bumper stickers and attack ads. It still empowers partisan regulators to circumvent the bipartisan FEC and engage in even more intimidation of private citizens who engage in political speech. And these, of course, are just to name a few.

Now, surely, as the Senate continues to do its job and strike down misguided ideas like these, we will hear plenty from folks who consider it evidence that this body is broken. But, of course, that simply is not true. The Senate is fully capable of taking landmark, bipartisan action that makes it easier to vote and harder to cheat.

Back in 2002, I was involved, along with my colleague Chris Dodd, in passing the Help America Vote Act. I was one of the leaders on that. We empowered State and local election systems to follow commonsense guideposts for integrity and accessibility. It provided basically a grant program to States to help them upgrade their voter systems after the Florida election in 2000. And the Senate passed it 92 to 2—92 to 2.

So if our Democratic colleagues really want to find common ground and act on common sense, the roadmap is right there. But, unfortunately, we know that has never been the case.

Unfortunately, this latest “compromise” is just a repackaging of what even reporters called a messaging bill that was headed nowhere. The substance is not really changing, so neither will the result.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Also under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Margaret Irene Strickland, of New Mexico, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Mexico.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### NOMINATION OF MARGARET IRENE STRICKLAND

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote on the nomination of Margaret Strickland for the U.S. District Court for the District of New Mexico.

For nearly 15 years, Ms. Strickland has served the people of New Mexico as a public defender and a civil rights attorney. With her extensive qualifications and distinguished career in public service, Ms. Strickland will make an excellent addition to the New Mexico District Court.

She began her legal career in the Law Offices of the Public Defender for the State of New Mexico, a role in which she handled nearly every type of criminal case. Over the years—and this is an amazing number—she has tried nearly 90 cases. The vast majority of her practice has been in Federal court.

Here in the Senate, Ms. Strickland boasts the strong support of her home State Senators, Senators HEINRICH and LUJÁN. Her nomination also received bipartisan support in our Judiciary Committee. She received a “well qualified” rating from the American Bar Association.

And like so many of the nominees coming from the Biden administration, she really shows professional diversity in her background. As a former public defender and civil rights attorney, she will offer a legal perspective that we often find missing from the bench. She has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to equal justice under the law, and as a judge, she will ensure that every voice is heard in the courtroom.

I urge my colleagues to support her nomination.

#### BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

On another note, Mr. President, in the coming days, this Senate has a historic decision to make and very little time to make it. We have to set aside politics, which the American people are begging us over and over to do, and we have to ensure that our government can continue to function in the midst of this public health crisis and a recovering economy. Now, in any reasonable scenario, these would be noncontroversial and nonpartisan endeavors, but sadly, at this moment in the U.S. Senate, reason is in short supply.

In recent days, some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have indicated that they are prepared to—listen to this—sabotage the routine process of government for political reasons. This could have a catastrophic impact on this Nation.

Last week, Senator McCONNELL reiterated that Republicans will not join Democrats in voting to deal with the debt limit. What exactly does it mean? Well, imagine if you and I just up and decided to stop paying your credit card bills. If Congress fails to raise or suspend the debt limit before the Treasury runs out of cash, our Nation runs the risk of default for the first time in history. That is why lawmakers have to set aside politics, as we have done

nearly 80 times in our history, to keep the government's bills being paid. Truthfully, this shouldn't even be a debate.

Raising or suspending the debt limit has nothing to do with any new programs or new spending. It is about paying off the tab that the government has already incurred. We are receiving the bill at the restaurant after we have had the big meal; the question is whether we will pay it.

Here is the kicker: Much of the debt that the Republicans are threatening not to pay was approved by Senate Republicans when Donald Trump was in the White House. In other words, we are being asked to approve the Trump debt from his years in the Presidency, which largely had the support of the Republicans, and the Republicans are telling us: “Hands off. We won't accept responsibility for the things we voted for during the Trump years.”

The last time Congress suspended the debt limit was in August 2019, a little over halfway through President Trump's term. Between then and the beginning of President Biden's term, congressional Republicans approved \$6 trillion in new debt. In fact, during Trump's one term in office, the national debt ballooned by 36 percent. Fiscal conservatives? During the Trump administration, the national debt ballooned by 36 percent. Well, that surely has happened before in history? No, I am sorry, it has not. That is the fastest it has grown under any President in American history. The Trump years were the biggest debt years in the history of the United States, and now the Republicans don't recognize it. They want to walk away from it.

You may be wondering: For what noble or productive purpose did the Republicans go so deep in debt during the Trump years? Well, a big chunk of it was Donald Trump's tax giveaway to the richest Americans—\$2 trillion—\$2 trillion in tax cuts for people at the superwealthy level in America. And now it is time to say to the Republicans: You voted for those tax cuts. The wealthiest people in America applauded you. Now would you at least step up and admit it?

Nope. Now that it is time for Republicans to pay for the meal that they ate, the political banquet, they are vowing instead to dine and dash. They are taking a page straight from the playbook of Donald Trump, the man who called himself proudly “the king of debt,” a man who didn't pay his own bills as a businessman and who incurred the largest increase in the national debt of any President in history. And in the process, the Republicans—to take this incredible and inexplicable stand—are willing to risk the full faith and credit of the United States.

When it comes to America's debt, default is simply not an option for any rational person. There is not a single American who will emerge unscathed if the Republicans execute this political strategy. Defaulting on our debt